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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Vienna, 14-25 June 1993
Agenda items 9, 10, and 11

**GENERAL DEBATE ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF OBSTACLES TO FURTHER PROGRESS IN THIS AREA AND WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN BE OVERCOME**

**CONSIDERATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY AND THE UNIVERSAL ENJOYMENT OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, KEEPING IN VIEW THE INTERRELATIONSHIP AND INDIVISIBILITY OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS**

**CONSIDERATION OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN AND NEW CHALLENGES TO THE FULL REALIZATION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND MEN, INCLUDING THOSE OF PERSONS BELONGING TO VULNERABLE GROUPS**

# Letter dated 21 June 1993 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights

## Addendum

VIE.93-535

Annex

Dear Sir,

I refer to the article concerning South Africa in "Terra Viva" of Saturday, 19 June.

Your readers deserve an accurate description of South Africa's position within the United Nations system.

It is indeed a matter of common knowledge, as reported by your correspondent, that the seats behind the "Afrique du Sud" nameplate have been deliberately left unoccupied since the beginning of the Conference. This is, however, of course not in any way to be seen or construed as disrespect to the United Nations or the Host Country. In fact, both have been carefully kept informed of South Africa's intention of not occupying its allocated seats. The word "Boycot", as used by your reporter, thus conveys a totally wrong impression, especially as this situation is certainly not due to circumstances of South Africa's own choosing.

As you may know, the Delegation of the Government of South Africa was expelled from the General Assembly in 1974 when its credentials were rejected. This has never been accepted by South Africa, as the Charter contains detailed and quite different procedures for expelling a member state which has transgressed the Charter. At the time, those in favour of the expulsion from the General Assembly made much of the argument that every assembly is master of its own proceedings. On this basis, at least, any predictions of how the World Conference might have decided on this issue must rest essentially on speculation.

South Africa remains a full member of the United Nations. Its flag flies prominently outside the building. The taking up of our seats in the Plenary is not something we wish or need to rush. Bearing in mind the constitutional developments in South Africa our full participation in all United Nations assemblies is now inevitable, in the shorter rather than the longer term. After having waited since 1974 to take up our seats in the General Assembly or General Assembly sponsored conference, South Africa has no intention of creating embarrassment, difficulties or even unease for anyone when readmission will happen as a matter of course within months.

Under these circumstances, to suggest, as does your article and headline, that President de Klerk of South Africa is arriving in Vienna "tomorrow" (which would have been on 20 June) to seek to benefit from the reflected publicity of the World Conference is downright untrue. By now you must know that President de Klerk did not arrive on Sunday and will only be arriving on 26 June. This was in fact explicitly explained to your correspondent by our Mr Mulder whom you quote in your article. It is thus difficult to comprehend what purpose the author of your report could have in persisting with this untruth, unless he wanted to create sensation out of a visit which has no such purpose.

Any suggestion that South Africa might attempt to gain any cheap publicity from the World Conference is rejected with contempt. However, after exhaustive consultations with many states in all regional groups, the South African Government decided not to formally take up its seats at the Conference. Among other considerations, South Africa did not wish to be a cause of division, particularly within the African group of which it inevitably will become a member shortly. Not least of all was South Africa's desire not to add even the possibility of yet a further subject of contention to the already heavily laden agenda of the World Conference.

The thus carefully considered decision by South Africa can for no single moment be seen as demonstrating any lack of interest in human rights, in general, or, in this Conference, in particular. Quite the contrary. Senior officials monitored all the sessions of the Geneva Prepcoms, as well as the informal intergovernmental consultations. Enquiries were made about participation in the African Regional Conference (not, incidentally, attended by the ANC or PAC) but it was decided not to do so when it became clear that that might embarrass the host institutions. An official from Geneva attended the Meeting of Senior Officials in Vienna before the Conference commenced. The current Conference is being followed by four senior diplomats, of which two are of Ambassadorial rank. We consult on a daily basis with the delegations from all regions and with the Secretariat. All our interlocutors know and appreciate our intentions and interests.

Shortly, a Transitional Executive Council will be established in South Africa. Consequently, the present authorities see it as their duty to remain abreast of the latest developments in this vital field to the benefit of all future governments and generations in our country.

In conclusion, let me repeat that the South African Government sincerely wishes the World Conference well, and will, for whatever role it can play, continue to be helpful in ensuring a fruitful and successful outcome for this important global gathering.